

Item # _____

Prepared by: Commissioner Henri Brooks

Approved by: Christy L. Kinard
Assistant County Attorney

RESOLUTION RENAMING THE SHELBY COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING LOCATED AT 160 NORTH MAIN THE “VASCO A. SMITH, JR. COUNTY ADMINSTRATION BUILDING.” SPONSORED BY COMMISSIONER HENRI E. BROOKS.

WHEREAS, Pursuant to section C(1) of the Shelby County Government naming policy requirements, in 1973 Vasco A. Smith won a special election for an at-large seat on Shelby County Quarterly Court, now the Board of Commissioners on which he served for twenty-one years; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to section C(2) of the Shelby County Government naming policy requirements, Commissioner Smith sponsored and supported bills to help the young, elderly, and indigent through the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission and a sixty-million dollar City Hospital. In addition he secured funding for programs such as Legal Services, Meals on Wheels, Community Services, and helped improve public housing, nursing facilities, and public education; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to section C(3) of the Shelby County naming policy requirements, Dr. Vasco A. Smith was a life member and Golden Heritage member of the NAACP, as well as officer and board member of the Memphis Branch for over fifty years. He helped to desegregate public facilities, participated in sit-ins and economic boycotts, and supported the Sanitation Strike that resulted in the unionization of workers and helped to organize Black Monday demonstrations that led to the restructuring of the Memphis Public School System. As an officer and member of the Shelby County Democratic Club, and the Democratic Voters Council, he organized and participated in campaigns that led to the election of African Americans to local, state, and federal offices; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to section C(4) of the Shelby County naming policy requirements, Dr. Vasco A. Smith served in the Army during World War II from 1943-1944. Upon his return, he opened a dental practice in Dyersburg, Tennessee. After a four year courtship by mail and before moving to Scott Air Force Base in St. Louis MO, Dr. Smith and Maxine Atkins were married on September 19, 1953 at Metropolitan Baptist Church by Dr. Samuel A. Owen Jr. Dr. Smith married Maxine between her graduation from Spelman and the start of graduate studies at Middleburg College. At Scott Air Force Base, Vasco continued to serve his country as an Air Force captain between 1953 and 1955. A devoted son, husband, and father, he supported and cared for his elderly parents in their later years. He and Maxine formed a marital, political, and movement partnership that lasted for fifty –six years. Vasco was a hands-on father, who bathed and fed his son, “Smitty” when he was born prematurely in 1956; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to section B(1)-(5) of the Shelby County naming policy procedures:

- (1) The full name of the person - Vasco Albert Smith Jr.;
- (2) The date of birth - August 24, 1920; Date of death September 28, 2009;
- (3) Residence of person - 1208 East Parkway South Memphis, Tennessee;
- (4) The association of the person with the facility - in 1973 Dr. Smith won a special election for an at-large seat on the Selby County Quarterly Court, now the Board of Commissioners, on which he served for twenty-one years;
- (5) Brief biography including all other data relevant to the commemorative naming –

A legendary figure in the struggle for freedom Dr. Vasco Albert Smith, Jr. had a long and distinguished career in public service, as a dentist, County Commissioner, and civil rights activist. Born in Harvard, Arkansas on August 24, 1920, he was the second son of Florence E. Smith and the Reverend Vasco A. Smith, Sr. He grew up in Memphis where he attended LaRose Elementary School, graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1937 and received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1941 from LeMoyne College where he became a charter member of Chi Psi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. A strong advocate for higher education throughout his life, he received a D.D.S degree in 1945 from Meharry Medical College where he was inducted into national and international dental honor societies.

As a Life member and Golden Heritage Member of the NAACP, as well as an officer and board member of the Memphis Branch for over fifty years, he helped desegregate public facilities, participated in sit-ins and economic boycotts supported the Sanitation Strike that resulted in the unionization of workers, and helped organize Black Monday demonstrations that led to the restructuring of the Memphis public school system. For his efforts, he was arrested five times. As an officer and member of the Shelby County Democratic Club and the Democratic Voter's Council, he organized and participated in campaigns that led to the election of Blacks to local, state and federal offices. When he and Maxine returned to Memphis in 1955, they began working in voter registration drives, and Vasco helped to increase Black registration from 10,000 to more than 160,000. When his wife became Executive Secretary of the Memphis Branch of the NAACP, president of the Memphis City School Board, and a member of the Tennessee Board of Regents, Vasco was by her side.

A jazz buff, Vasco became a member of the Memphis Jazz Society, taught a course in jazz at the then Shelby State Community College, and amassed an awesome collection of records, tapes, and compact disks, many by Memphis musicians. A Renaissance man, he played contract bridge, swam up to forty laps a day, and specialized in growing tropical plants. In recognition of his outstanding service to the community, he received many citations and awards, including a Civil Rights Award from the National

Dental Association, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from the Tennessee Baptist Theological Seminary. In 2002, he became a founding member of Freedom's Chapel Christian Church (DOC) where he was active until the time of his death; and

(6) Detailed information (size, shape, type of material), maintenance costs, and total cost –

There are two signs on the administration building that will require changing, one at the east entrance and one on the west entrance. These signs are approximately 5' x 10.5' rectangles and constructed of metal with the lettering in cast bronze. The cast metal County seal on each will be reusable. There is little or no maintenance on this type of sign. The cost estimate is \$5, 600 per sign or \$11,200 for both signs. This pricing does not include installation.

WHEREAS, Shelby County Government deems it fitting and proper to rename the County Administration Building located at 160 North Main in honor of Vasco A. Smith, Jr.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE, That the Shelby County Administration Building located at 160 North Main be and the same is hereby named the "Vasco A. Smith, Jr. County Administration Building."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a fitting and appropriate plaque and signage shall be erected commemorating this naming.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution shall become effective in accordance with the Shelby County Charter, Art. II, § 2.06(B).

County Mayor

Date: _____

ATTEST:

Clerk, County Commission

ADOPTED: _____